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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------065484 281910Z /41
P R 281840Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6283
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 03681

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR TSPA GW CG UR US UK FR
SUBJECT: OTRAG: ALLIED REPLY TO SOVIET DEMARCHES

REFS: (A) LONDON 2875; (B) PARIS 5864; (C) STATE 42718;
(D) BONN 2737; (E) STATE 25960

BEGIN SUMMARY. LONDON PREFERS THE DEPARTMENT'S MOST RECENT PROPOSAL FOR WORDING THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF THE ALLIED REPLY TO THE SOVIET DEMARCHES ON OTRAG. IF NECESSARY FOR REACHING TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, THE UK WOULD ALSO ACCEPT EITHER OF THE TWO FORMULATIONS RECOMMENDED AD REF BY THE THREE EMBASSIES ON JANUARY 27. ACTION NOW SHIFTS TO PARIS, WHICH HAD ALREADY APPROVED THE TWO JANUARY 27 TEXTS BUT WHICH HAS NOT YET FORMALLY CONSIDERED THE DEPARTMENT'S COUNTERPROPOSAL.
END SUMMARY.

1. US, UK, AND FRENCH EMBOFFS MET FEBRUARY 27 TO DISCUSS
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THE ALLIED REPLY. BRITISH INSTRUCTIONS ANTICIPATED BY REF (A) HAD REACHED BONN THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 23, BUT THE FRENCH ACTION OFFICER (MASSET) WAS AWAY FROM BONN AND HIS EMBASSY PREFERRED TO DELAY THE MEETING UNTIL HIS RETURN.

2. THE US REP RECAPITULATED THE REACTIONS OF CAPITALS

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TO THE VARIOUS REPLIES DRAFTED IN BONN AS FOLLOWS:

-- THE DECEMBER 23 AD REF TEXT HAD BEEN APPROVED BY WASHINGTON AND PARIS,BUT LONDON'S APPROVAL HAD COME TOO LATE FOR IT TO BE USED BEFORE DELIVERY OF THE SECOND SOVIET DEMARCHE.

-- THE JANUARY 19 AD REF TEXT HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT BUT PARIS HAD REQUESTED AN AMENDMENT TO QUALIFY THE STATEMENT THAT THE THREE ALLIES WERE SATISFIED THAT NO GROUNDS EXISTED FOR THE SOVIET CONCERNS, BY INSERTING THE PHRASE "IN THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR INFORMATION." BOTH WASHINGTON AND LONDON REJECTED THIS CHANGE, ALTHOUGH LONDON AGREED THAT SOME QUALIFICATION OF THE JANUARY 19 TEXT WAS IN ORDER.

-- ON JANUARY 27,THE THREE EMBASSIES RECOMMENDED TWO ALTERNATIVES AIMED AT MEETING THE US DESIRE TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO THE FRG POSITION BUT ALSO THE FRENCH DESIRE TO LEAVE A SLIGHT OUT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS. PARIS HAD ACCEPTED BOTH ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED ON JANUARY 27,BUT THE DEPARTMENT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT EITHER OF THEM.

3. THE US REP ALSO RECALLED THAT ON FEBRUARY 1 HE HAD INFORMED HIS TWO COLLEAGUES OF THE DEPARTMENT'S CONFIDENTIAL

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PROPOSAL FOR RESOLVING THE WORDING OF THE SENTENCE IN QUESTION (REF E). UNTIL NOW, WE HAD BEEN AWAITING LONDON'S REACTION TO THE JANUARY 27 PROPOSALS. MASSET STATED THAT BOTH THE US AND THE UK HAD BEEN ANXIOUS TO REPLY QUICKLY TO THE SOVIET DEMARCHE, BUT THAT A MONTH HAD NOW PASSED WITH ABSOLUTELY NO ACTION. HE FOUND THE WHOLE SITUATION A BIT SURPRISING. HIS INSTRUCTIONS REMAINED THAT BOTH FORMULATIONS PROPOSED ON JANUARY 27 REMAIN ACCEPTABLE (ALTHOUGH PARIS HAD A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR THE FIRST ONE). THE MATTER HAD ALREADY BEEN CONSIDERED SEVERAL TIMES AT A VERY HIGH LEVEL IN PARIS, AND IF WE CONTINUED TO CHANGE THE PROPOSED TEXT HE SIMPLY WAS UNABLE TO PREDICT THE REACTION IN PARIS. HE ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION OF THE MONTH'S DELAY.

4. YOUNG (UK) RESPONDED THAT THE MATTER HAD ALSO BEEN DEALT WITH AT A HIGH LEVEL IN LONDON. THE DIFFI-CULTY HAD SIMPLY BEEN ONE OF GETTING THE ATTENTION OF MINISTERS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. THE US REP ADDED THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT THE REPLY SHOULD BE DISPOSED OF AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 03681

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POSSIBLE. HE DREW FROM REFS C AND E TO POINT OUT THAT
OUR OBJECTIVE WAS TO HAVE A COMMON RESPONSE WHICH WOULD
TO THE FULLEST EXTENT POSSIBLE SUPPORT THE FRG
RESPONSE TO THE SOVIETS WITHOUT IMPLYING THAT WE ARE
COMPLETELY RELIANT ON THE FRG FOR INFORMATION. HE
ARGUED, AS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, THAT THERE SHOULD BE
NO HINT IN OUR REPLY OF ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE OTRAG
OPERATION. AT THE SAME TIME, IN DEFERENCE TO THE
FRENCH AND BRITISH DESIRES TO AVOID A TOTALLY
CATEGORICAL DENIAL OF THE SOVIET CONCERNS,
THE DEPARTMENT HAD SUGGESTED THE WORDING, "WE FOR OUR
PART HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT" THOSE CONCERNS.

5. YOUNG STATED THAT THIS US PROPOSAL HAD BEEN
REPORTED TO LONDON AND THAT LONDON ACCEPTED IT. WHILE
LONDON WAS ALSO WILLING TO ACCEPT EITHER OF THE
JANUARY 27 FORMULATIONS IN ORDER TO GET TRIPARTITE
AGREEMENT, THE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSAL ("WE HAVE NO
EVIDENCE") WAS IN FACT LONDON'S PREFERRED TEXT.

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6. MASSET HAD EVIDENTLY NOT REPORTED THE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSAL BUT AGREED WITH RELUCTANCE TO DO SO NOW. HE PROFESSED TO SEE LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THAT PROPOSAL AND THE FRENCH PROPOSAL CONCERNING THE JANUARY 19 AD REF TEXT, AND HE AGAIN EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT AT THE MONTH'S DELAY. THE US REP URGED THAT HE POINT OUT, IN REPORTING, THAT THE US PROPOSAL WAS DESIGNED TO MEET THE FRENCH OBJECTIVES WHILE STILL PROVIDING MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR THE FRG POSITION. MASSET ACKNOWLEDGED THAT POINT BUT SAID THAT GIVEN THE STATE OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS HE COULD NOT "RECOMMEND" A FURTHER CHANGE TO PARIS BUT COULD ONLY REPORT IT NEUTRALLY.

7. FOR CLARITY, WE REPEAT HERE THE FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED REPLY AS AMENDED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND ACCEPTED BY LONDON, WHICH MASSET IS NOW REPORTING TO PARIS:

BEGIN TEXT

I WISH TO REFER TO THE SOVIET STATEMENTS OF AUGUST 22, 1977, AND JANUARY 11, 1978. ON BOTH OCCASIONS YOU INFORMED US OF DEMARCHES WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS MADE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FRG WITH REGARD TO THE OTRAG ROCKET TESTING FACILITY IN ZAIRE.

WE HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THE MATTERS RAISED IN YOUR STATEMENTS, INCLUDING THE REFERENCES TO QUADRIPARTITE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND TO "KNOWN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS," IN CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM, WHICH WERE SIMILARLY APPROACHED BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE ALSO CONSULTED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FRG.
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IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FRG HAS RESPONDED TO THE INQUIRIES POSED BY YOUR GOVERNMENT. WE FOR OUR PART HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. NOR ARE WE AWARE OF ANY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELEVANT TO THIS MATTER.

END TEXT

8. COMMENT: SHOULD PARIS REACT NEGATIVELY, WE WOULD AGAIN BE FACED WITH THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO GO FORWARD WITH REPLIES WHICH ARE SIMILAR BUT NOT

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IDENTICAL. THE OBVIOUS DISADVANTAGES OF DIFFERENT REPLIES, IN TERMS OF HOW THEY WOULD BE VIEWED BOTH BY THE FRG AND BY THE SOVIETS, REMAIN. GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF TIME WHICH HAS ELAPSED ALREADY, OUR RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE TO WAIT A FEW DAYS FOR A FRENCH REACTION BEFORE TAKING A DECISION ON THAT QUESTION.
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